

Last words

An Industry Guru gives us his thoughts on technology:
Gene Gerke of Gerke & Associates.

Leverage and planning



Gene Gerke

In this crazy world of rapidly changing technology and business not-as-usual, what do I do about information technology (IT)? I have two recommendations: Leverage what you have and develop a simple IT plan.

Leverage what you have

You already have IT systems in place. Are you getting everything you can out of those systems? I bet not.

Look at your current systems and find what you can do to streamline processes, get better information faster, improve back-office productivity, find new margin dollars, stop cash shortages quicker, adjust labor schedules, improve cash management, pinpoint cost savings, etc. Look at your major systems for mining new margins and savings – POS, back office, home office, fuel, payment systems, merchandising, etc. Often you can partner with your solution providers to find ways to get more business value from your current IT investment.

Have an IT plan

While the c-store business is tough and the technology advances at a dizzying pace, it is imperative to have an IT plan in place. Without an IT plan, you will become frustrated and make unwise technology investments. To start, all IT plans need some basics:

- What are my automation wants/needs and priorities?
- What are the systems integration and infrastructure I will need to implement the technology I want?
- How will I implement and support all of these technologies and systems?

So what should you do? Take out that yellow pad and jot down one idea for getting more out of each of your current major systems. Also, provide initial answers to the three planning questions above. Then go make it happen.

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